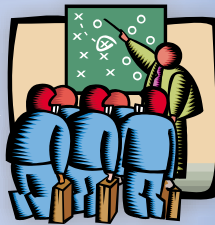
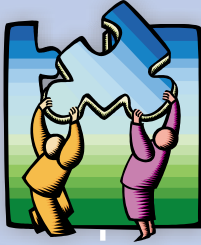
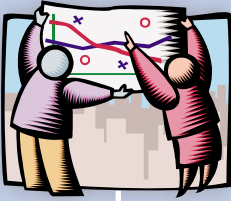


Strategic Plan



INTRODUCTION

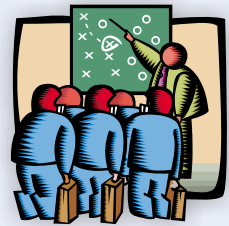
To meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population and an expanding and changing marketplace the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) initiated a strategic planning process to plan the future of DCA.

An Executive Team consisting of senior staff representing boards, bureaus, programs and divisions within DCA was convened. Since November 1999 the Team has held a series of meetings to:

- assess external factors impacting the public and DCA;
- review the Governor's priorities and directives; and
- identify DCA's constituents and the issues they face in the marketplace.

The purpose of an *Environmental Scan* is to assess external factors that impact the public, DCA's role in public protection, and its overall mission. The seven major external factors identified were:

- Changing Government Structure
- Business Deregulation
- Mergers
- Globalization
- Changes in Distribution of Goods and Services
- Practice without Presence
- Demographics



In addition, it was important to assess the numerous changes in the political and regulatory arena which have directly impacted DCA and its mission. A detailed analysis is provided in the Appendix.

Once this *Environmental Scan* was complete, the team proceeded to identify its constituents, draft mission and vision statements, identify values and guiding principles, and set department-wide goals and objectives.

The team identified constituents who rely on DCA to meet their various needs:

INDIVIDUALS

- Consumers
–procurers of services and products
- Public
–general users of services and products
- Students
- License Applicants
- Licensees
- Employees

ORGANIZATIONS

- Executive Branch
- Legislature
- Consumer and Public Interest Organizations
- Professional Associations
- Federal Agencies
- Other State Agencies
- Law Enforcement Agencies
- Educational Institutions

MISSION STATEMENT

To promote and protect the interests of California consumers by:

- Serving as guardian and advocate for their health, safety, privacy and economic well-being.
- Enhancing public participation in regulatory decision-making.
- Promoting legal and ethical standards of professional conduct.
- Identifying marketplace trends so that the department's programs and policies are contemporary, relevant, and responsive.
- Partnering with business and consumer groups in California and the nation.
- Working with law enforcement to combat fraud and enforce consumer protection laws vigorously and fairly.

VISION STATEMENT

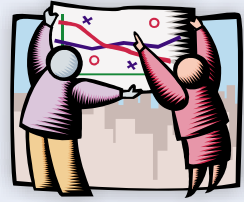
California consumers and practitioners will have a safe and fair competitive marketplace because the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) listens to the needs and concerns of consumers, consumer groups, and the business community. DCA will be successful in its endeavors because it instills confidence in government through its common-sense approach to public policy and resolution of consumer issues. DCA's employees set the standard for innovation, creativity, and competent, timely customer service because management provides a work environment that is rewarding and inspires personal growth.

VALUES

- DCA has public access, assistance, and service as its primary focus.
- DCA listens, learns, and plans so it can successfully educate and advocate for consumers.
- DCA values customers' and employees' trust.
- DCA values employees' *can do* attitude.
- DCA values human diversity and individual differences.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES



To serve as an effective advocate for

consumers, DCA must establish and maintain collaborative working relationships at the local, state, and national levels. DCA must identify the needs and issues of individual consumers, consumer groups, and business communities. Because of its partnerships with consumers, consumer groups, and business communities, DCA is an active advisor and advocate for consumer issues in public policy decision-making processes.

To provide responsive and relevant service to consumers and providers,

DCA must be able to make decisions based on timely, reliable information. DCA must understand consumers' needs and how each segment of the marketplace affects consumers, functions internally, and interrelates with the marketplace as a whole. DCA can then develop and maintain a relevant structure that is effective in protecting the public while remaining responsive to the business community's needs.

To assist consumers in making decisions, DCA must, through outreach efforts and community presence, provide consumer education, disseminate information that consumers can use to make informed decisions, and identify emerging issues that may affect consumers and the business community.

To achieve our goals, DCA must continue to recruit and retain its talented employees and cultivate and expand its diverse workforce. The most effective method of attracting people with a *can do* attitude is to provide the best training and opportunities for personal growth. DCA emphasizes a positive, varied, and dynamic work environment that is free from all discriminatory practices. Our employees are creative problem solvers. DCA must support them in becoming problem anticipators. Our employees are our most valuable asset. They are the ones who keep us ahead of the curve and they are the department's public face.

STRATEGIC GOALS

1. Enhance individual consumer access to and assistance from DCA.
2. Develop DCA's role as a consumer advocate so it can use its expertise to impact public policy relating to consumer issues.
3. Establish relationships with (1) consumer and public interest groups, (2) business and professional communities, (3) law enforcement agencies, and (4) other governmental agencies to create a contemporary, relevant approach to consumer protection and marketplace regulation.
4. Revitalize DCA's organizational structure, processes, and systems to deliver responsive, effective, and innovative services.

GOAL 1: Enhance individual consumer access to and assistance from DCA.



OBJECTIVES

- Reaffirm the customer service culture within all levels of DCA by sharing with employees the DCA strategic plan and leadership's definition of and expectations for customer service.
- Establish a Deputy Director for Consumer Relations and Outreach who is responsible for oversight, evaluation, and enhancement of consumer services, assistance, and complaint handling functions.
- Evaluate current processes, procedures, and policies and make recommendations to enhance consumer access, assistance and complaint handling functions.
- Evaluate the Consumer Information Center, Complaint Mediation Center, and the Communications & Education Division; define their roles and responsibilities within the department's consumer assistance functions; and make recommendations to expand and enhance services to meet consumer needs.
- Create a proactive public outreach and information gathering program.

GOAL 2: Develop DCA's role as a consumer advocate so it can use its expertise to impact public policy relating to consumer issues.

OBJECTIVES

- Develop and implement a process to identify and address consumer issues as they arise.
- Develop a process to incorporate public participation in DCA policy decisions.
- Develop a plan to inform DCA's constituents of its role as an advocate for consumer issues as well as its mission, its vision, and its goals.

GOAL 3: Establish relationships with (1) consumer and public interest groups, (2) business and professional communities, (3) law enforcement agencies, and (4) other governmental agencies to create a contemporary, relevant approach to consumer protection and marketplace regulation.

OBJECTIVES

- Enhance relationships with consumer and public interest groups.
- Establish relationships with appropriate federal, state, and local agencies to coordinate development and implementation of public policy affecting consumers.
- Create a process for industry input into department policies.
- Develop an ongoing process to evaluate and modify services to ensure that they stay responsive to customers' needs.
- Update practice acts and regulations to make them relevant, consistent, and responsive.

GOAL 4: Revitalize DCA's organizational structure, processes, and systems to deliver responsive, effective, and innovative services.

OBJECTIVES

- Enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of DCA's bureaus and program.
- Enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of DCA's boards, committees, and commission.
- Enhance and streamline licensing and renewal processes.
- Develop a data and information collection and dissemination process that provides relevant and timely information for planning purposes.
- Develop and implement an annual planning process to evaluate and modify strategic and operational plans.
- Evaluate and make recommendations to enhance the organization and administrative functions of DCA.
- Develop and implement a process that identifies emerging training needs for employees to enhance their knowledge, skills, and abilities.

APPENDIX

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN EXTERNAL FACTORS

BUSINESS DEREGULATION

- Increased competition between businesses
- Resultant increase in choices for consumers
- Increased confusion and resentment for public
- Increased individual responsibility of consumer
- Increased importance of public education
- More vulnerability to white collar crime
- Reduced deterrent against consumer fraud

MERGERS

- Increased global competitive stance for businesses
- More consumer choices in some instances, fewer choices in others
- Better research and development outcomes
- Increased clout of merged entities
- Consumer confusion
- Increased costs
- Lack of accessibility and accountability
- Resultant impacts on workers and labor issues

GLOBALIZATION

- Increased competition and consumer choices
- Reduced impact of local and state government
- Foreign investment in California businesses and infrastructure
- Education and cultural changes
- Resultant impacts on safety, labor, and employment standards

DEMOGRAPHICS

- Increased elderly and young populations
- Increasing cultural diversity affects consumers, regulators, and the education system
- Increase in population affects natural resources (air, water, and space), infrastructure, and the education system
- Changing ways of educating and informing consumers
- Increase in niche marketing
- Changing demographics affects focus of consumer concerns (health care, insurance, etc.)

CHANGES IN DISTRIBUTION OF GOODS AND SERVICES

- Increased on-line and catalog shopping impacts all areas of consumer services
- Increased use of credit and related consumer credit problems
- Increased choices and available information
- Resultant changes and problems with consumer redress, refunds, and returns
- Resultant privacy issues and information verification problems
- New marketplace opportunities and long-term impacts on business
- Limited accessibility to on-line services
- Increased exposure to illegal activity
- Large outlet and warehouse businesses impact costs, choices, labor, and the environment
- Impact on the state's resources (positive and negative)
- Loss of privacy
- Loss of personal contact
- Increased access to information

PRACTICE WITHOUT PRESENCE (ON-LINE AND GLOBAL PRACTICE)

- Marketplace moving faster than state regulation
- Global and interstate practice puts pressure on state policies and stresses national standards
- More convenient, cheaper, and quicker service
- Increased competition and business opportunities
- Availability of specialization
- Accountability and fraud problems
- Expansion of “virtual” campuses for education

POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

- Term limits
- Increased influence of trade associations
- Tendency towards short-term problem solving
- Decreased impact of state agencies
- Defused or nonexistent consumer groups/interest
- Public perception of government

CHANGES SINCE 1970

In 1970, the Consumer Affairs Act created DCA. Since then, there have been many changes in the marketplace and in the law:



- 1976 – Public Members Act adopted
- National standards and reciprocity concerns have increased
- Advent of prescription drug advertising
- FDA advertising requirements for products have improved
- Information available to consumers has increased
- White-collar crime is increasingly prosecuted
- Consumer groups (public and private) have been nearly eliminated
- Proposition 13 decreased funding for consumer enforcement agencies
- Specialized consumer groups (single issue) have become more prevalent
- Different funding mechanisms for consumer groups
- Elimination of general fund and consumer services for DCA
- Improved focus on board issues in DCA
- Increased trade association impact
- Improved overall quality of executive officers and board members
- Increased focus on Governor's office
- Sunset review impact on DCA and the boards
- Decreased number of industries regulated
- Marketplace interest now drives issues
- Increased liability has impacted businesses and consumers
- Better Business Bureau impact has lessened
- Consumerism is more mainstream
- Changing technologies have affected consumers and industry

New laws have improved consumer protection (Lemon Law, privacy laws, warranty laws, disclosure laws, small claims court reform, three-day cooling-off period, etc.)

